Bologna-Projekte der Österreichischen Universitätenkonferenz
Im Focus: Non-formales und informelles Lernen

Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning in OECD Countries, with a Specific Focus on Higher Education

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(The opinions expressed in this power point presentation are those of the author alone)*

Agenda for Today

-Context
-Definitions
-Rationale
-Country Practice
-Potential Barriers
-Cost and Benefits
-A Country Overview
-Suggestions for Ways forward

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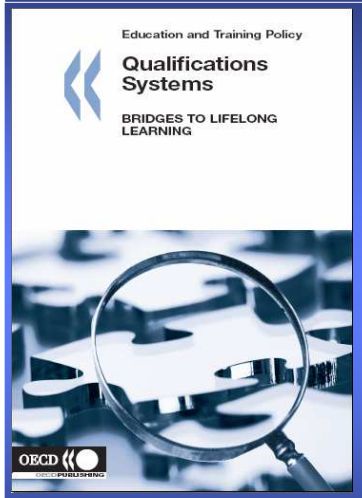
Published in 2007 ☺☺☺



With Mike Coles (QCA)

For a summary see:

www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/2/38500491.pdf

Starting Point

-RNFIL = mechanism to create more and better lifelong learning

-as well as:

.Credit transfer [system]

.Qualifications framework

.Stakeholders involvement

.Information and guidance

…

Participating Countries

22 countries on the 5 continents
(16 review visits)

Australia, Austria, **Belgium-Flanders, Canada, Chile**, Czech Republic, Denmark, **Germany**, Greece, **Hungary**, Iceland, **Ireland, Italy, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain**, Switzerland and the **United Kingdom**

www.oecd.org/edu/recognition

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Definitions

Many terms even in English only:

- **RPL** (Australia), **PLAR** (Canada), **APL** or **APEL** (UK), Ireland uses them all...
- **RAS** (Recognition of Acquired Skills)
- (Recognition of previous knowledge ☹)
- Recognition of Learning Outcomes

…

Other languages:

- **EVC** (Belgium Flanders, Netherlands), **VAE** (France), Italia (many terms), RANFI (Mexico), Acreditación (Spain)…

Definition: Recognition of What?

- Not consensual ☹
- Proposed definitions (in short ☺)
- Formal learning: learning that is structured in terms of content, scheduling, organisation and financing
- Informal learning: unintentional, not all the above
- Non-formal learning: in between, for local specificities
- Recognition: outcomes have value and are used in the society (**Social Recognition**)
- Key issue: recognition does not necessarily mean a high level of formalisation, but it needs some

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Rationale: Different Levels

- Rationale given by the context:
  - Demography, distribution of qualifications
  - Many individuals are skilled but their skills are not visible and, therefore, not recognised
- Rationale given by the objectives:
  - Labour market
  - Formal education and training
- Cost
- Strong motivator: entry into Lifelong Learning
  - Develop VET

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Overview of Key Issues and Practice

-Rhetoric
-Information, advice and counselling
-Legal framework
-Piloting/Evaluation (data… ☹)
-"Physical" support: [e-]portfolio and the like (ProfilPASS, Competence passport/card…), certification
-Assessment methods: exam, simulation, observation, interview (standards…)

Overview of Key Issues and Practice

-Financing and fees
-Quality assurance
-Dedicated assessment centre(s)
-Aims and outcomes: exemptions, credits, full qualification
-Recognition of NFIL will not create economic growth
-Recognition of NFIL does not create the skills, knowledge and competences it is meant to recognise…
…But it is still a learning process

Countries Offering Full Qualification on the Basis of RNFIL Only

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Full Qualification for all Qualifications	Full Qualification in Some Instances	Not Possible
	South Africa, Australia, Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Canada (Québec, Ontario, Saskatchewan), Denmark, Italia (Emilia Romagna), Mexico, Norway, Pays-Bas, UK (Scotland and England), Slovenia, Switzerland	Germany, Canada (other provinces and territories), Korea, Chile, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italia (Val d'Aosta, Macerata), Czech Republic

Countries Offering Full Qualification on the Basis of RNFIL Only

Full Qualification for all Qualifications	Full Qualification in Some Instances	Not Possible
Ireland	South Africa, Australia, Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Canada (Québec, Ontario, Saskatchewan), Denmark, Italia (Emilia Romagna), Mexico, Norway, Pays-Bas, UK (Scotland and England), Slovenia, Switzerland	Germany, Canada (other provinces and territories), Korea, Chile, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italia (Val d'Aosta, Macerata), Czech Republic

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Applications of RNFIL

Type of Application	Exemplar Countries	Typical Examples
Second chance school certificate	Canada, Mexico, Norway, Chile, Spain	GED, *Bachillerato*, adult education referenced to school system

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Applications of RNFIL: Higher Education

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Second chance school certificate	Canada, Mexico, Norway, Chile, Spain	GED, *Bachillerato*, adult education referenced to school system
Entry to higher education	South Africa, UK, Belgium (Flanders)	Universities working together (CENEVAL), access to higher education courses
Exemptions from formal programmes	Hungary, Chile, UK, Belgium (Flanders)	Modular higher education programmes, with exemptions available, specific credits. University discretion over exemptions

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Discrete applications	Belgium (Flanders), Hungary, Canada, Greece, Germany	ECDL, language certificates, professional bodies

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Barriers in Short

-Psychological (stiffness, legitimacy of NFIL)
-Cost (yes yes yes)
-Input process unknown (and therefore not quality assured)
-Understanding what it is about (*"you will give degrees to everybody"*)

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Findings (related to cost)

-Information, Advice and Guidance is necessary… and it comes with a cost

-Getting people to describe and analyse their learning is time consuming, and it is correlated with initial level of education and training… and it comes with a cost

-RNFIL does not create skills, or barely (key element because this means that the skills, knowledge and competences must be already there)

Cost/Benefit Issue about Certification

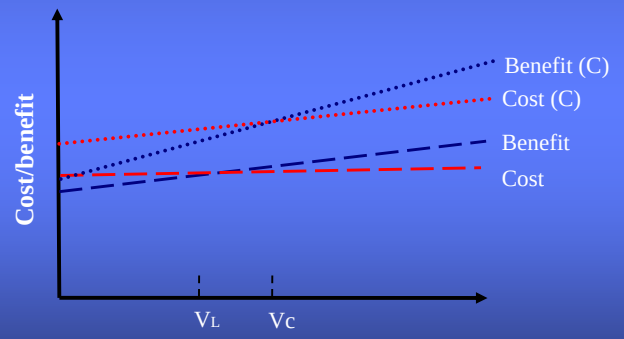
-Real question:

Additional cost of formalisation (certification)
(assessment, quality assurance, issuing certificates…)

vs.

Additional benefits
(signalling, visibility, regulated occupations…)

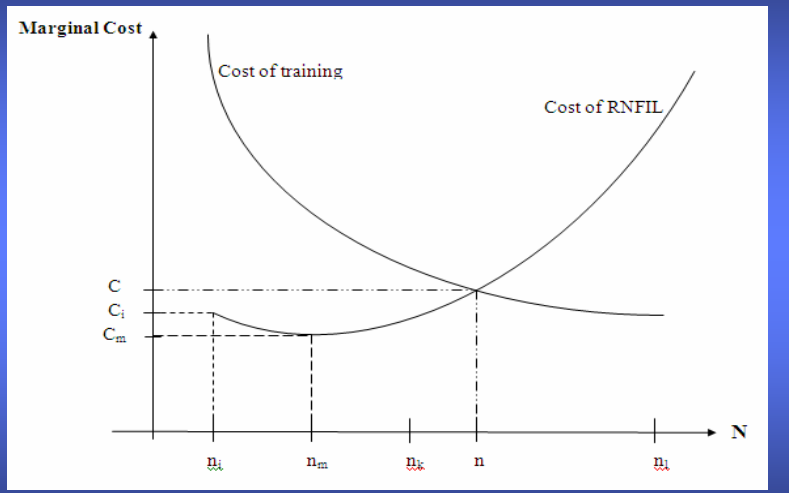
Cost-Benefit Model



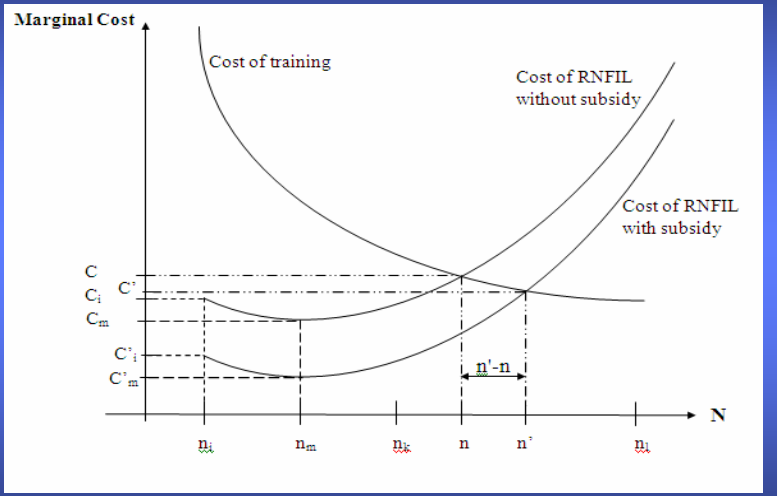
Marginal vs. Average Cost

Training as an alternative to RNFIL

Recognition vs. Training



Recognition vs. Training (cont'd)



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Countries with a RNFIL System

Model	Characteristics	Countries
System	Inclusive policy, a vision, a culture of RNFIL and a global system. In detail: legal framework or political consensus, practice, all groups or individuals, financial provision, quality assurance, all levels and sectors of education and training, significant participation, high level of acceptance by the society, evaluation of the system (data, research…)	
Quasi-System	Inclusive policy, a vision and a global system. In detail: legal framework or political consensus, practice, all groups or individuals, financial provision, quality assurance, all levels and sectors of education and training,	

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Countries with a RNFIL System

Model	Characteristics	Pays
Consistant set of practices	Vision. In detail: many practices, access for most individual profiles, some financing available. Not all levels or educational sectors.	
Fragmented set of practices	Clear objectives. In detail: practices, target groups, some financing. Few levels or educational sectors.	

Countries with a RNFIL System

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Fragmented set of practices	Clear objectives. In detail: practices, target groups, some financing. Few levels or educational sectors.	Germany, Spain, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Iceland, Switzerland

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Model	Characteristics	Pays
Some practices	Some convincing attempts in very specific fields, sectors or institutions.	
Initial stage	Some actors show some interest in the RNFIL concept. Some attempts in very narrow fields, sectors or institutions on a small scale. Some rhetoric in the context of lifelong learning. Some broad documents. A lot of inertia.	
Nothing	No practice, no policy orientation documents, no rhetoric, no interest whatsoever for the concept of RNFIL	

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Food for Thoughts

-Why is it most people believe RNFIL is free/cheap?

.Because there are hidden subsidies

.Because they may have the wrong variable for cost

-Cost/Benefit analysis will prove very difficult because, as always, we do NOT observe all the positive externalities (well known issue in the field of adult Learning for instance)

-Recotillet and Werquin (forthcoming, CEDEFOP, EJVT): an attempt at evaluating VAE, with French Data

[My] Short Conclusion

-All learning should be recognised

-There are cases where the recognition of non-formal and informal learning process may not need to be highly formalised

-Some countries are close to having a system.

-A lot of work – cultural shift… – needs to be done; especially with academics

m e r c i

Please visit:
www.oecd.org/edu/recognition

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